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Integrating Material Handling into the Automation Process

Control Starts In the Tool Crib

Europe's Best Flex Systems

Highlights of IMTS '86

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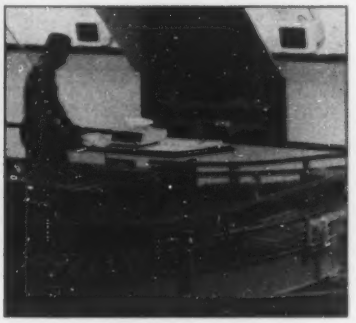

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FEATURES

IMTS-86: AN ACTION-PACKED SHOW OF SHOWS

46 *The hype that in the past has been so much a part of previous shows was largely absent. This year's show emphasized practical manufacturing solutions to contemporary problems. The bells and whistles, so much a part of previous shows were not ringing as loudly as in the past*

INTEGRATING MATERIAL HANDLING INTO THE AUTOMATION PROCESS

62 *Material Handling is one of the least developed areas of technology serving industry as measured by its development over the past decade. Recent advancements, however, provide an opportunity for a quantum-leap in material handling improvements.*

CONTROLS START IN THE TOOL CRIB

75 *Improvements in productivity and cost savings are some of the ways to measure payback on initial investment. Most manufacturers fail to control this area adequately.*

FOUR OF EUROPE'S BEST 'FLEX' SYSTEMS

78 *Europe has led the way with the implementation of flexible manufacturing systems. The investment is now approaching $100 million. PRODUCTION Magazine focuses on four of the continent's most outstanding examples of 'flex' technology.*

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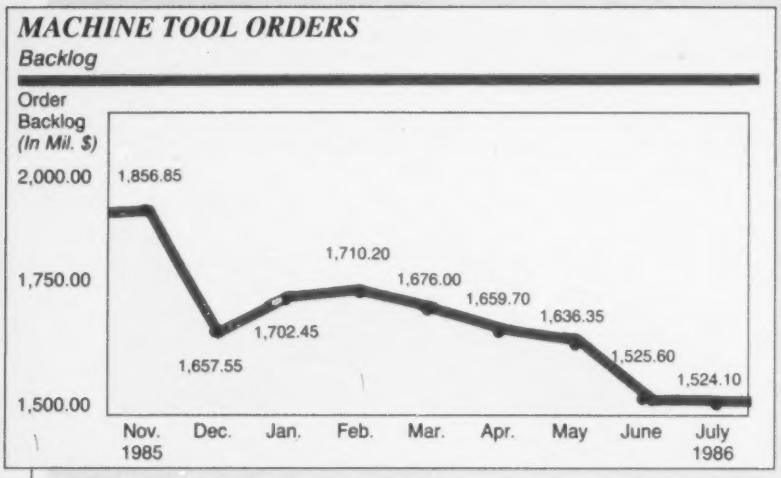

Machine Tool Orders Fall in July

The National Machine Tool Builders' Association (NMTBA) reported that July orders for machine tools totaled $189.15 million, down 6 pct from the $201.15 million June figure. Cumulative orders for the first seven months of 1986 were $1,405.50 million, down 10.4 pct from the same period a year ago.

July orders for metal cutting machine tools fell 4.5 from June, posting a total of $149.75 million. This figure is almost identical to July a year ago, when the total was $149.85 million. Year-to-date orders for metal cutting machine tools were dwon 9.2 pct compared to the same period in 1985. Metal forming equipment orders, totaling $39.40 million for July, were down 11.2 pct from June and down 21.2 pct when compared to July a year ago. This represents a year-to-date drop of 13.9 pct.

"Summer is traditionally a slow period for the machine tool industry. In addition, buyers frequently defer purchase decisions in the months immediately preceding our International Machine Tool Show. Therefore, we remain confident that the situation will improve as we move into fall and industrial activity picks up," commented James A. Gray, president of the Association.

Shipments of metal cutting machine tools fell to $151.60 million from $244.80 million in June, a drop of 38.1 pct. July's figure represents a 21.2 pct rise compared to July a year ago and 27.8 pct rise for the first seven months of 1986 compared to the first seven months of 1985. Metal forming machine tool shipments fell to $39.05 million for July, a 41.8 pct drop from the June figure of $67.10 million. This represents a 44.0 pct drop in metal forming shipments from July a year ago but only a 3.2 pct drop in total year-to-date shipments.

Combined shipment figures for metal cutting and metal forming machine tools fell 38.9 pct for the month but rose 17.2 pct for the first seven months of 1986.

DOE Finances 'Clean Coal' Research

Nine "clean coal technology" projects have been named as the Department of Energy's top choices to demonstrate a new generation of environmentally clean coal concepts.

The projects, picked from 51 proposals submitted to the agency in April, were chosen on the grounds that they offered the greatest likelihood of successfully demonstrating and subsequently commercializing emerging clean coal technologies.

The first facilities to use technologies under this program could be built and in operation within several months after cooperative agreements with the government are signed, although some of the larger projects will not be ready for testing until the early 1990's.

The nine companies named are as follows: Weirton Steel Corp., Weirton, W. Va.; American Electric Power Service Corp., Columbus, Ohio; the M. W. Kellogg Co., Cairnbrook, Pa.; Babcock & Wilcox, Allaince, Ohio; Ohio Ontario Clean Fuels Inc., Warren, Ohio; Coal Tech Corp., Marion, Pa.; General Electric Co., Cincinnati; Energy and Environmental Research Corp., Irvine, Calif.; Energy International Inc., Cheswick, Pa.

If agreements are reached with all of those selected, the proposers will share $360 million in federal funds while contributing nearly $600 million in total private financing. The 65-35 ratio of private to federal funding is well above the minimum 50-50 cost-sharing required by the Congress when it established the program in 1985.

When the Congress appropriated almost $400 million for the program last year, it mandated a full competition open to all markets. The nine projects selected propose new coal technologies for a variety of different market applications, including utility power generation, industrial processing, steelmaking and fuel production.